

AN ESSAY
ON THE
ORDER OF CREATION.

INAUGURAL DISSERTATION
FOR THE ATTAINMENT OF THE DEGREES
OF
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There is an important distinction between receiving a truth on the authority of testimony, and arriving at the same truth by a process of reasoning. I may believe that a certain piece of mechanism had a maker because I am told it had, or I may believe this truth from the evident marks of intelligence and contrivance which I see in it. In like manner, I may believe that the world was framed by God, simply because God himself tells me so, or I may come to this conclusion from the traces of beneficent design and skill with which it everywhere abounds. In the one case, I ascend through Nature up to Nature's God. In the other case, I descend from God to Nature. In the one case, I converse with God, and hear with all the docility of a child what He says about His own world. In the other, I converse with the world, and hear what it says concerning the wisdom, power, and goodness of Him by whose fingers it was framed. In the one case, my faith rests upon the soundness of my own intellectual processes: in the other it rests in child-like simplicity upon a Father's testimony. Now while it is an undoubted truth that the heavens declare the glory of God, and

the firmament showeth forth His handiwork' — that ,the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead,' — yet, we are not left to the circuitous method of reasoning out the fact of a Creator from the fact of a Creation — of ascending through a succession of consequents and antecedents up to one great spiritual being as the designing efficient cause of all things. God himself comes forward and announces that ,of old He laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of His hands' — that ,He made the earth by His power, established the world by His wisdom, and stretched out the heavens by His discretion'. We therefore believe that the world was made by God, not simply because the idea of a world involves the idea of a world-maker, even as the idea of a watch involves the idea of a watchmaker, but because the Great Creator Himself assures us that, ,in the beginning He created the heavens and the earth'. ,Through faith', that is faith in God's own testimony, ,we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.'

There was a time when the records of Inspiration and the discoveries of Science were supposed to be irreconcilable. It was imagined that the supposed Mosaic date of the creation, did not give to our globe an antiquity sufficiently remote, to account for

those rocky formations and fossil remains which modern geologists have brought to light. But a more careful perusal of the Bible record has proved that there is nothing in the statements of Scripture when rightly understood, at variance with the established facts of Science.

With a view to reconcile the biblical and geological records, the days of the first chapter of Genesis have been interpreted not as natural days, but as lengthened periods. By the adoption of this theory, it is supposed that ample time is afforded for all the phenomena which Geological Science has unfolded during the last century. Notwithstanding the distinguished philosophers, such as Cuvier, Parkinson, Hugh Miller, who have adopted and ably supported it his theory, I am not able to fall in with it, for the following considerations. I. The opening verses of Genesis are not an oratorical discourse, a poetical composition, or a prophetic announcement, but a plain simple narrative, in which consequently, the introduction of figurative language is not to be expected. II. Any intelligent reader, whose mind was unbiassed by particular theories, would, I incline to think, regard the successive days of creation week as natural days. III. The division of time into weeks of seven days, must have been derived from the days of the first chapter of Genesis being understood as natural days. The revolution of the earth on its axis, the revolution of the moon around the earth, and the revolution of the earth round the sun, give us the division of time

into days, and months, and years, but I am not aware of the revolution of any planet that would furnish a measure of time by weeks. Such division must therefore have been derived from the ancient and universal belief that God created the world in six natural days and rested on the seventh. IV. Upon the periodic theory a most fanciful, and in my judgment, most unwarrantable liberty requires to be taken with such language as this — ‘He divided the light from the darkness. And God called the light day, and the darkness He called night, and the evening and the morning were day one’ — ‘And God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because that in it He had rested from all his works which God created and made.’ The verbs here are in the past tense and appear to describe past events, not to intimate that He is now resting during this period of man’s redemption. V. According to geologists the third day was the carboniferous period, characterized by magnificent flora, and the sun did not become visible until the fourth day. Now if the third was an age of vast duration, how, in the absence of the sun, could the plants and trees of this period attain to such richness and luxuriance as is claimed for them? If there was sufficient heat on the earth’s crust to nourish them, they must at least have been perfectly colourless. VI. The terms of the fourth commandment appear to me irreconcilable with the periodic theory. It is not likely that the term day would be used both in a literal and figurative sense

in the same command. In whatever sense it is used in one part, to maintain consistency of interpretation, it must be understood in the same sense throughout. According to the natural day theory, the reasons assigned for working six days and resting on the seventh are suitable and cogent; but according to the periodic theory, they seem to me to be inappropriate. From all the foregoing considerations taken together I do not see my way to the adoption of the periodic theory, though much that is plausible has been advanced in support of it. Nor do I see any necessity for resorting to it in order to harmonize Scripture with geological discovery. The view, so well expounded by my distinguished teacher — the Rev. Dr. Chalmers of the University of Edinburgh — appears to me to be more satisfactory. He shows that between the first act of creation which called into existence all things out of nothing, and the first act of the first day's work recorded in Genesis, there may have intervened periods of vast duration, during which ample room is afforded for the successive creations and formations of geologists. The sacred writer does not inform us when the matter of our mundane system was called into existence. He merely informs us that 'in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth' — but when that beginning was — how long prior to the first day of creation week, we know not. A very long interval may have elapsed between the period when God 'created the heavens and the earth', and the period

when the ,spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.' For any thing the Bible says to the contrary, the interval may have been sufficiently long to account for every physical fact which modern Science has revealed. Set geologists then demand for the globe an antiquity as remote as they please — let them carry us back if they will over the mighty track of innumerable generations which followed each other in regular succession prior to the commencement of our present system, there will be found nothing in the sacred narration at variance with the antiquity demanded. The facts of Science and the statements of Scripture when rightly understood must ever be in harmony. God is the author both of the volume of Nature, and the volume of Revelation, and between the teaching of the one and the teaching of the other, there never can be any real, though for a time, there may an apparent discrepancy. Let the students of Theology and of Science learn there to exercise patience and mutual forbearance. Let not the geologist, when he discovers some new fact which, at first sight, may appear to clash with the statements of Inspiration hastily conclude that Nature is opposed to Revelation, and consequently that Revelation cannot be divine. And let not the student of the Bible refuse to acknowledge well established facts in Science, upon the ground that they are not in harmony with some favourite interpretation. But let both set themselves to the more diligent and prayerful study of the word, and to the more careful and cautious

investigation of Nature, and the result will be that the Bible when properly understood, and Science when fully matured and perfected, instead of contradicting each other, will be found in most delightful harmony.

In endeavouring to unfold the order of creation it is not necessary to determine, if the question could be determined, in what manner the facts of creation were communicated to Moses. Whether the communication was verbal, or ideal, or viseral, does not affect the validity of our statements. It is generally agreed that Moses describes the successive acts of creation as they would appear to an inhabitant of our Planet had he been an eyewitness of the scene, and it is a very interesting question, whether Moses describes the creation optically, because optically revealed? But this question we cannot at present discuss. Neither do we pause to consider, in what manner the creating Spirit operated upon the watery Chaos. His mode of operation is altogether wrapt in obscurity. The sacred writer informs us that the earth was without ,form' — shape, and ,void' — empty; destitute at that precise point in its history, of those plants and animals which afterwards replenished and adorned it; — ,and darkness was upon the face of the deep' — all was dreary, confused and lifeless, when the spirit of God ,moved' upon the face of the waters, as a hen broods over her eggs during the period of incubation, or hovers over her young for their comfort and protection. The mysterious motions of the Spirit

on the dark, shapeless, lifeless mass communicated to it heat and vitality and deposited within it those seeds and germs of life which caused it hereafter to teem with every form of animal and vegetable production.

The result of the Spirits movements, whatever may have been the mode of His operations, was grand and glorious beyond all possible description. The first thing produced was light. God said in the language of unapproachable majesty, light be and light was' — *יְהי אֹרֶךְ יְהי אֹרֶךְ* — *Γενηθήτω φῶς καὶ ἐγένετο φῶς* — *sit lux, et lux fuit*. At the bidding of the Divine Creator the darkness which shrouded the earth dispersed, the thick vapours that rested upon the face of the deep partially cleared away; the struggling rays of the sun now penetrated the dense and awful gloom; but as yet the sun himself, the source of this light is invisible. It was not until the fourth day that the atmosphere became completely clear, and the orb of day for the first time in the history of our present mundane system shone forth in all its glory and diffused the splendour of his cheering and life-giving beams throughout every region and corner of the new formed world. That light must have existed not only prior to the fourth day, but prior even to the first day, is evident from the discoveries of geology. Remains of animals have been found in the rocky bosom of the earth which must have walked our planet long anterior to the Mosaic Hexaemeron. These animals were furnished

with eyes, which proves the existence of light, — for what use could organs of vision be to animals in the absence of light? Geology informs us too that gigantic trees, and herbs, and plants, flourished in rich abundance during the same antemundane era, and these required both air and light to bring them to perfection and preserve their existence. The earth too must have revolved on its axis in order to secure the succession of that evening and morning which constituted day one. It is thus very clear that light existed before the first day. But at the time the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the deep all was disorder, confusion, and darkness. A thick impenetrable gloom settled down upon the watery chaos, so that the sun, which, in all probability shone as brightly then as he does now, was altogether invisible, and not a single ray was able to penetrate the awful darkness which then shrouded the globe. But no sooner did the creating Spirit command the light to appear, than the darkling clouds dispersed, light faint and partial sprang up and diffused itself over the wide expanse, and a sunless day was ushered in upon the new formed globe.

The production or manifestation of light having constituted the work of the first day, the Divine Spirit proceeded with His separating processes, and on the second day, by means of the firmamental expansive atmosphere, divided the waters which were above the firmament from the waters which were under the firmament. The heavy vapours which still

brooded over the earth's surface were pressed down by the incumbent atmosphere, and commingled with the chaotic waters, whilst the lighter vapours ascended, and formed watery clouds, which were borne up by the supporting elastic air which now became fitted to be the medium of light and life to the destined inhabitants of the globe, and which now for the first time divided the waters from the waters'.

Proceeding with the work of separation, the Divine Spirit next separated the waters from the earth, and caused the dryland to appear. Hitherto it would seem, land and water had been largely commingled, but at the command of omnipotence, the waters retired to those hollows or receptacles, which by terrible convulsions and upheavings of Nature, He had provided for them. Thus the seas were formed, and the land arose from the deep in isles and continents, and the creating spirit clothed its mountains and valleys and plains with verdure, and caused plants and trees possessed of perpetual reproductive powers everywhere to spring up and beautify the virgin soil. This constituted the work of the third day.

But heat and a brighter light than was yet enjoyed were necessary to secure the continuance and maturity of those vegetable productions which now clothed the surface of the new formed world. Hence the sun which had hitherto been veiled by the watery clouds which lay piled above the firmament, now appeared in all his glory, imparting warmth to the cold crust of the globe, pouring a flood of light into

its every nook and corner and gloomiest recess, causing herbs and plants and trees to shoot forth into richest luxuriance, and making hill and dale, ocean and stream to rejoice with unutterable gladness. Now the full-orbed moon, the Queen of night sheds her silvery radiance over land and sea; now the azure vault appears studded with numberless shining orbs, and the whole expanse is lighted up with innumerable glories; now the mists and fogs of night are chased away by the outbursting sun who comes forth as a bridegroom from his chamber, and rejoices as a strong man to run his appointed race across the vault of heaven; and now these lights of our planets and rulers of our seasons are set apart, to be for signs and for seasons and for days and years.' O give thanks me to the Lord for He is good for His mercy endureth for ever — to Him that made great lights for His mercy endureth for ever; the sun to rule by day for His mercy endureth for ever, the moon and stars to rule the night for His mercy endureth for ever.'

But as yet there is no animal life. The ocean surrounds the globe with its tranquil waters, and reflects from its glassy surface the beams of the recently manifested sun, but it is empty. The circumambient air has been purged of its vapours, and has become the appropriate element of winged songsters, but it is empty. The earth now smiles in beauty, rejoices in its verdant covering and vegetable stores, and expands its bosom to receive the warm

rays of that glorious orb which now pours down upon it a flood of light and splendour, but it is empty. Now living thing, in the history of our present mundane system, has yet appeared to proclaim the Creator's goodness, or rejoice in the habitable world. But earth, and air, and sea are now to be peopled with their appropriate occupants, and every department of nature is presently to teem with life and joy. Accordingly, God said, let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven.' This was the work of the fifth day.

On the sixth day the land animals were created. The 'Cattle', comprehending all the herbivorous animals; the 'Beast' comprehending all the carnivorous; and 'creeping thing', comprehending the reptile species — now graze upon the plains, and roam through the forests, and glide over the surface of the soil. These various classes of animals now walk our planet, endowed with appropriate instincts, for the purposes of self-preservation, the propagation of the species, and the protection of offspring. 'And God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and every thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind, and God saw that it was good.'

But ere the sun of the sixth day went down, man, the crowning masterpiece of creation, appeared upon the stage of life. In the Mosaic record of the order of creation it will be observed that there

is a gradual rising from what is excellent to what is more excellent — a progressive elevation along the upward march of creation, until man appears as the noblest of the works of God. First, we have things inanimate; then, vegetable life; then, animal life; then, as in man, intellectual, moral, and spiritual life. The Divine command goes forth and dead, lifeless matter starts out of previous nothing into existence. The command again goes forth, and plants and trees shoot forth to adorn with verdure and beauty the hills and valleys of our virgin earth. The command again goes forth, and the waters and air are peopled with myriads of living wonders. The command again goes forth, and numerous tribes of mammiferous animals come into being. And finally the command goes forth, or rather after solemn consultation amongst the persons of the Godhead, and intelligent, responsible, immortal man appears, bearing the image of his Creator, having no darkness in his understanding, no perversity in his will, no wrong bias in his judgment, no disorder or alienation in his affections — the whole current of his intellectual, moral and emotional nature flowing in one clear stream of universal holiness — and exercising with mild and gentle sway that dominion over the inferior animals with which his Maker had invested him, and for which his lofty faculties and moral qualities eminently qualified him. In whatever aspect man is viewed, he must be regarded as the grand centre of the great circle of being — the sumtotal of all the tribes of animal

existence -- the glorious substance of all the previous shadows of approaching humanity -- the realization of all the archetypal forms of life which preceded and foreshadowed him -- the deputed lord, and final cause of this sublunary world.

That man, or indeed any animal or plant now existing, is the result of developement, is the wildest and most groundless fancy of a disordered imagination. It is an incontrovertible fact that there was a time when the present living organisms began to be -- that there was a time when they had no existence, and hence their present existence can have no other origin than the creative fiat of Omnipotence. If the present races of plants and animals had been developed from other plants and animals of different species, the developement would have been capable of being traced. Until therefore the Samarckians and Darwinians exhibit to us fossiliferous specimens of every stage of growth and advancement, from the earliest dawn up to the manhood and perfection of their being, we shall refuse to believe in any paternal relationship between the present and former generations of animal and vegetable life.

That the present varieties of the human race sprang originally from one pair, and not from different primary ancestors, is not only the doctrine of Scripture, but also of Science and Philosophy. Anatomy, physiology, language, mental phenomena, historical research, tradition, all unite in pointing to an identity of species, traceable to one common origin.

Humboldt, Prichard and other distinguished men of Science, every way competent to investigate this interesting subject, have been conducted to the conclusion, that on the sixth day of creation week, God formed but one single pair, from whom all the existing varieties of the human family have been derived.

There are many things which lead us to conclude, independently of Revelation, that this fair world of ours will not last always. Nothing material seems destined to perpetual duration. Decay appears stamped upon all sublunary things. Flowers spring up and deck our lovely bowers and then fade away and die. Empires rise and fall. Animals appear upon the stage of life for an appointed season and then pass away. Planets that seemed destined to shine perpetually among the brilliant throng of their companions have disappeared, or by some catastrophe, have been broken up, and their meteoric fragments coming within the sphere of the earth's attraction, have fallen upon our planet, and have been deposited in museums to gratify the curiosity of scientific enquirers. All these things seem to indicate that the earth itself is destined to destruction, and that when it has served the purposes intended by the Almighty, it shall either return to its original chaos 'without form and void', or form the materials out of which. A new heaven and a new earth shall be constructed, and in which loyalty and righteousness shall have an everlasting abode.

The various revolutions too which the earth has already undergone conduct to the same conclusion. If our mundane system at some very remote period, has been subjected to the action of fire; if at a later period it has been overflowed by water, it is only in harmony with past phenomena to look forward to a period when it shall again be revolutionized, and subjected to changes more magnificent in themselves and more momentous in their results, than any it has yet experienced.

Add to these considerations the unquestionable fact, that in the bowels of the earth there is a vast magazine of fire. What are volcanoes, but so many pent-up-fires by which these pent-up-fires make their escape, and thus save our planet from terrific explosions. What are earthquakes, but the result of the agitation of these central fires which burn with intolerable intensity in the bosom of the earth, and which contribute to the growth of those vegetable productions which grow on its surface. And is it not a well ascertained fact, that after the crust of the earth has been penetrated to a certain depth, the further we afterwards descend, the heat increases proportionally? All these considerations corroborate the Scripture statement that 'The earth is kept in store reserved unto fire', or more literally, kept stored with fire unto the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. Is it not therefore a most solemn thought that both the deductions of Science and the announcements of Revelation assure us that

we are treading upon the cooled crust of a globe whose interior is stored with fires of immense magnitude, which only wait the mandate of Him who maketh the winds His messengers and flaming fire His ministers, to burst forth with tremendous violence and envelope the visible universe in one vast sheet of flame?’

,The cloud-capt towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
And all that it inherits, shall dissolve,
And, like the baseless fabric of a vision,
Leave not a wreck behind!’
